



WORLD HEALTH COLLABORATING CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- Globally public health systems are not adequately prepared for rapidly evolving health threats.
- Many countries are decentralizing their public health systems without ensuring that the local public health infrastructure can cope with the increasing responsibilities and changing tasks.
- Regular measurement of a country's public health system performance is needed to assure that its populations are protected and served by effective public health services.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) have worked collaboratively since 1996. In December 2001 these organizations established the World Health Collaborating Center for Public Health Practice. The Center's mission is to strengthen public health systems globally and assure the effective delivery of essential public health services through performance measurement, improvement planning, and systems development at both the national and subnational levels. Assessment of public health systems has been completed in 42 countries around the world. Based on this analysis governments have developed targeted interventions to strengthen public health systems and enhance the delivery of public health services. Based on these assessments, the CDC and PAHO produced a joint publication entitled *Public Health in the Americas*, that details the state of public health systems in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Example of programs in action:

- The application of the assessment process in each country has been seen as an intervention in itself. The data are readily available for discussion by participants drawn from all levels of the health system and the discussions that take place permit immediate identification of problem areas within the system as well as targeted interventions to strengthen the system. This has led to some of the countries using the data to help develop national health plans. For example, Barbados has used the data from the assessment of its public health system to help formulate a National Health Plan for their country.
- Additionally, from June to September 2002, the CDC collaborated with AfriHealth. The collaboration seeks to measure educational capacity for training in public health for African nationals, and is housed at the University of Pretoria. The final product will be a list of institutions and training programs that are offered by various universities and training institutions (Schools of Public Health) both inside and outside of Africa.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Technical assistance services are being strengthened to support use of the assessment instrument. Regional and local level assessment instruments are being developed. Their use will be coordinated with national-level assessments. The instruments will promote collaboration of the public and private sectors. In partnership with the World Bank, the Collaborating Center will provide data that assures more targeted use of funds that will improve accountability and quality improvement of public health systems.

For information about this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/programs.

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